

January 5, 2025

We Have Decided to Follow Jesus

Matthew 28:16-20

Recently, I was walking along the beach with a friend. We were there in the off-season, so we were the only two on this beach in Florida in the winter. As we turned and looked behind us, my friend remarked that it was amazing to see only two sets of footprints. “Yes,” I said. “Do you suppose Jesus is carrying one of us?”

I was referring to the poem “Footprints,” which imagines a person looking back on his or her life and seeing that Jesus walked alongside, constantly seeing two sets of footprints. But then the person becomes upset that during the hardest parts of life, there was only one set of footprints. When the person asks Jesus about this, he tells the person that those were when Jesus was carrying him or her.

As I sit here today reading this passage from 1 Peter where we are instructed to follow in Christ’s footsteps, I think we should always look behind us and see one set of footprints. One could be for the times Christ carries us, but the others should be when our footprint fits directly on top of Jesus’ footprint.

This week, we have been invited to reflect on what it means to be a disciple in Jesus’ beloved community. As the beloved, we are companions and friends with Christ, but as disciples, we are also followers of Christ. In our rush to claim our friendship, let us not too easily see ourselves as equals alongside Christ. Christ is our friend, brother, and beloved, but he is also our leader. It is in his footsteps we follow, not his footsteps we are alongside.

Christ leads along the path away from sin. It is a path that rejects deception. It is a path that does not answer insults with more insults. It is a path that does not seek revenge, and it is a path that trusts in justice. If we find ourselves on that path, we also find ourselves on a path that leads to the fullness of life. We also find ourselves on a path that seeks and expresses love. That is a wonderful path to be on.

Let us commit as we go through life to try to be in Christ’s arms when we are in seasons where we need the care and support and otherwise to walk directly behind Christ, stepping in his footsteps. In both cases, we will find ourselves in the path of love.

1. On what path is Christ leading you?
2. Have you ever been distracted and gotten off Christ’s path? How did you get back on track?
3. When have you felt you were following right behind Christ?

Adapted from *Daily Bible Studies*, Winter 2024–2025, by Timothy Merrill (Cokesbury, 2024).